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RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

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EDITORIALS

The Jewish Crisis in Poland

DR. STEPHEN S. WISE, in the name of the American Jewish Congress, has sent out a call for an emergency conference on the Jewish situation in Poland to be held Sunday, January 31. The summons should be answered by every Jewish organization in the country, and as large and complete a representation of all groups and organizations in American Jewry as possible should be present at the conference.

It is impossible to ignore any longer the grave crisis facing the Jews in Poland. Daily their position grows more precarious. Already their plight is worse than it was in Czarist days, and soon they may be in a position where they will even be envious of the Jews in Germany. To make out a detailed bill of complaint would tax the energy of the best of chroniclers. Each day adds new items to the long list of discriminations and persecutions and pogroms instigated with and without the connivance of the Polish government. Only the other day the Governor of Warsaw, Yarshevitz, sent for the editors of all Jewish newspapers and threatened to suspend their publications and to send them to concentration camps, unless their attacks ceased. And what were they attacking? The dissolution of the Warsaw Jewish Communal Council and the appointment of a Government Commissariat to direct Warsaw's communal affairs. It matters not to the Government that this was a violation of the minority clauses of the Versailles Treaty. It brutally continues its relentless policy of riding roughshod not only over the minority rights guaranteed to the Jews, but over elementary human rights. By taking leaves out of Hitler's *Mein Kampf,* and by the use of ingenious devices of its own, the Polish Government is slowly bringing about the physical and spiritual ruin of the more than three million Polish Jews.

We cannot stand idly by and watch a strangulation worse than death, of the second largest Jewish community in the world. The time has come to speak out, to raise such a cry that not only Poland but the entire world will be constrained to listen and to act. Poland is not Germany. It was created by the big powers after the War, and on condition that it respect in full the rights of minority groups within its borders. It is still subject in this respect to the League of Nations. But in a more basic sense, Poland is dependent for its welfare and existence on other countries, particularly France. It is no self-contained country. It needs the financial and moral and military support of the large European powers. *"Lo alman Yisrael."* We Jews are still not so weak and powerless that our protests should be futile. The mass demonstrations

of American Jewry against Hitler and the boycott of German goods did have some effect. We can do no less for Polish Jewry.

In a previous issue of this magazine, we recommended the pursuance of a constructive program for the rehabilitation of Polish Jewry, as suggested by Samuel C. Lamport. But since we are not of the panacea-minded, who believe in applying one type of remedy—and only one, we regard the method of protest in no way contradictory to the constructive method previously outlined. The enormity of the Polish-Jewish problem renders even the most ingenious and creative *single* plan inadequate. For that reason, although we reaffirm our faith in the Lamport plan, we do not feel that we can content ourselves with it alone, any more than we should be prepared to resort to protest alone. American Jewry must leave no stone unturned to ameliorate the condition of Polish Jewry.

Curbing Capitalistic Sabotage

THE decision of Justice McCook of the Supreme Court of New York in the case of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union versus the Blue Dale Dress Co., Inc. and the Blue Fox Co., is a significant victory for social justice in industrial relations. These two companies were parties to a collective agreement with the union which expressly forbade employers to remove their factories beyond the five-cent fare limit. In defiance of their agreement, these companies removed their machinery from New York City to Archibald, Pa., where they could get labor on their own terms. Justice McCook's decision orders them to return their machinery to the city, rehire their locked-out laborers, and reimburse them for their losses.

Those who dogmatize about the law and the courts, affirming that these are of necessity instruments of the privileged classes in their oppression of the laboring masses will find it difficult to fit Justice McCook's decision into their theory. By his sound judgment, the inviolability of contract, which has so frequently been used to defeat collective bargaining, has been invoked to support it. The wording of that decision shows Justice McCook to be well aware that he was helping to forge a new weapon for labor in its fight for a more adequate share of the fruits of its work. He says:

"With the end of the NRA appeared a new need for such contracts as the one in this suit. Without a remedy as wide as that need, unscrupulous employers of labor will be tempted to play one community off against another, unlawfully depriving New York City of her business and her inhabitants of their livelihood."

The decision goes as far as a judicial decision can go to remedy an intolerable situation. It strengthens faith in the possibility of democratic procedures in the attainment of social justice. But it calls attention to a problem that cannot be solved by judicial action alone. Warned by such a decision, corporations will be reluctant to enter with their unions into contracts of the sort involved in this case. Only very strong unions will be able to obtain such contracts from their employers. The great mass of laborers will still be at the mercy of capitalistic saboteurs, who, rather than give their workers wages equivalent to the value of what they produce, will deprive them of work altogether by fleeing from the scene to some other locality where they can make profits out of human misery and desperation. There must be legislative curbs against the flight of capital as a tactic of class-warfare.

Timid souls need not fear that this means a radical violation of the rights of private property. It is only by the most extravagant kind of legal fiction that a corporation can be regarded as a person and its capital as private property. The very purpose of the existence of corporations is to escape such responsibilities as apply legally to individuals in a partner-

ship. The fact that corporations must have a charter from the government in order to do business implies a recognition that they are quasi-public institutions whose right to conduct their activities requires public sanction. To apply to their capital the concept of private property is to use both the word 'private" and the word "property" in a Pickwickian sense. There is need and justification for legislation designed to make illegal the removal of an industrial plant from one community to another when this is contrary to public policy.

Reconstituting Child-Care Agencies

THE much-talked-of merger of child-caring agencies within the New York Federation of Jewish Philanthropic Societies raises certain fundamental questions of policy and organization which should be of the utmost concern to the leaders and guiding spirits of this undertaking. While the initial urge for the consummation of a merger stems from the growing awareness on the part of Jewish communal leaders that there is needless duplication of work and a corresponding waste of funds in the child-welfare field as at present constituted, a deeper examination of the situation in the child-care field will reveal another set of conditions that should also be reckoned with if the proposed merger is to be an act of far-seeing statesmanship as well as a routine matter of administrative coordination.

We have reference to certain practices and policies obtaining at present in some agencies, which should be corrected or eliminated before a merger of all agencies is effected. It may be a shock to the trustees of child-caring agencies to learn that the head of one child-caring institution, perhaps as a compensation for his own lack of status in the social-work field, has been communicating to his wards, directly and otherwise, a feeling of inferiority and of shame for belonging to the Jewish people. We know of a situation where the head of a child-caring agency for girls is an assimilated half-Jewess who possesses no Jewish cultural interests to communicate to her wards. When such people are permitted to head Jewish child-welfare work, they naturally surround themselves with subordinates who reflect their own beliefs and sentiments.

Trustees of child-care agencies who are, on the whole, well-meaning but preoccupied business or professional men, are often not aware of such situations when they exist. For according to the present set-up in most child-caring agencies, the trustees deal only or almost exclusively with one individual, the superintendent or executive director, and reckon only with the reports as submitted by him. They have little or no dealings with the rest of the personnel. As long as the agency plant outwardly appears clean, and as long as there is no public scandal to embarrass them, trustees as a rule believe that they are discharging their duties faithfully. This, of course, is a superficial, shortsighted view which is often not warranted by a deeper examination of the facts in any given situation. We know, for instance, of a large child-caring institution where the heads of departments do not meet regularly for a sharing of experience and a discussion of common problems. Each department goes its own way, sometimes at cross-purposes with the activities of other departments. The head of that institution changed his title from Superintendent to Executive Director, but it is a title in name only, for he does not execute any coordinated, integrated direction.

In some child-care agenies, counsellors

and social workers are engaged without any requirements as to Jewish knowledge or Jewish cultural interests. Such institutions would not think of engaging a person with a contagious physical disease, yet they do not hesitate to engage as acting foster-parents men and women who radiate a negative, often self-demanding attitude toward Jews and Judaism.

It has often happened that cultured well-to-do parents find to their dismay and chagrin that their grown-up child exhibits a set of thought, emotional, and behavior patterns wholly at variance with the home environment and training which they thought they were providing for that child. Psychiatrists in unravelling such cases have discovered that the basic thought, emotional, and behavior patterns of such children were laid not by the parents who meant well, but by the semi-literate uncultured governess who stamped her own personality upon the child during the crucial childhood years when he was most impressionable. The child may have been provided with all the physical comforts of a beautiful home and with all formal training, yet his personality was corrupted by the untoward influences which at an early age were unknowingly permitted to capture his soul.

It is the same with child-caring agencies. Trustees are too often prone to judge the success of an institution by its outward show of physical cleanliness and administrative efficiency. The fact that the child's personality may be irretrievably corrupted by certain policies or practices pursued by the executive head or by his (culturally or professionally) unqualified subordinates, the hiring of whom is itself a pernicious policy, rarely, if ever, occurs to them. When they are confronted with such facts or considerations, they are tempted to ignore them, if only because they do not feel professionally competent to deal with such intangibles as the spiritual and personality-forming aspects of child-upbringing. Yet, as any trustee upon reflection will admit, these are the most crucial matters which go to the heart of any successful child-rearing program.

It is important, therefore, in any negotiations for a merger, that the problem of amalgamation be conceived as something more than that of coordinating the many Boards of Trustees and of centralizing the work of intake, foster-care, institutional-care and after-care agencies.

To remedy some of the major evils as indicated or intimated above, we submit to the trustees of the existing child-care agencies the following recommendations for their consideration and action:

a) We suggest that the newly-coordinated Board of Trustees become in name and in fact a Board of *Directors,* and be more than mere guardians in behalf of the city. Let them assume full responsibility really to *direct* the policies of these agencies.

b) Let the new constitution make provision for the infiltration of new blood on this Board. Too often in the past has membership on a Board become a family inheritance regardless of the qualification or interest of the relative of the deceased member. The Board should be democratic in its composition and should consist of a cross-section of the Jewish population. In addition to the business and professional men, the new Board should include a number of Jewish workers or labor-union leaders.

c) While the new Board will no doubt be subdivided into a number of committees, those committees which are to supervise some professional aspect of child-care work ought to be headed, wherever possible, by a professional man or woman. Thus, the newly organized Board should have a doctor to head the medical committee, a psychiatrist to head the psychology committee, and a rabbi or a professional Jewish educator to head the religious education committee.

d) To insure a check and balance system in each agency, and to preclude any major abuses, departmental heads should

be constitutionally required to submit once a year to the chairman of their committee, and not merely to the executive director, a report of their work, together with recommendations. Furthermore, chairmen of committees should be required by the constitution to discuss the reports with the heads of departments responsible to them.

e) To insure the selection of the right type of departmental heads, counsellors, social workers and religious school teachers, a minimum standard of requirements ought to be stipulated by the Board. In such requirements, the professional preparation and the Jewish equipment of the candidate ought to loom large.

f) To insure an equitable allocation of wages and salaries, the new Board ought to make provisions for a permanent Personnel Practices Committee (apart from the Budget Committee) whose chief concern should be to work out a uniform salary scale with due consideration for professional preparation, tenure of office, hours of work, responsibility, etc.

Let it not be said years hence that the prime movers of this merger did not plan wisely or sufficiently, or that they possessed a good business sense in effecting a savings in money but lacked the vision and foresight to safeguard and make adequate provision for those abiding aspects of a child-rearing program which are most truly significant and which give content and meaning to the words *Jewish* and *care* in any vital concept of a Jewish child-caring agency.

The Palestine Orchestra and "The Eternal Road"

TWO thrilling events of profound significance for the Jewish and the artistic world took place recently: the opening concert of the Palestine Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Arturo Toscanini, in Tel Aviv, and the premiere of "The Eternal Road," in New York. These events should give new courage to Jews who have an abiding faith in the esthetic and creative possibilities of Jewish life.

Even the static of short-wave transmission could not dull the glamour of the music that came from Palestine. Every note evoked a meditation: These artists, driven from their native lands, probably touched the deepest abyss of despair; now they were playing under the inspired baton of the world's acknowledged master of music. . . . The sprightly, joyous and *verboten* strains of Mendelssohn; could a more exquisite defiance of fascism be imagined? . . . The roar of ecstatic applause and cheering; was it for the music, for Toscanini, for the artists, or was it the tear-choked exultation of a free people in its freedom? . . . That surge of pride, of dignity, in us, seated at the radio; had this something to do with the Psalmist's immortal words: "When the Lord brings back captive Zion, we shall be like dreamers! Then will our mouth be filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy.?"

"The Eternal Road" is another source of *nahas* for the Jew. Staged magnificently, and touched by the genius of Reinhardt, Franz Werfel and Kurt Weill, it has kindled the enthusiasm of critics and audience, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. In a sense, there is more creativity in this production than in the Toscanini concerts. "The Eternal Road" reveals the vast and fabulously rich sources of artistic creation latent in the historic experience of the Jewish people, and gives the lie to those who blandly condemn diaspora Jewry to eternal sterility.

Once again we are led to the conviction that Jewish loyalty and Jewish life will be revitalized not by debate, and not by argument, but by the exercise of that divine spirit of creativity in art with which we are endowed. With the multiplication of such events as we were privileged to experience recently, Jews will soon learn how to be happy that they are Jews.

Jewish Life: Asset or Liability?

By ALBERT S. GOLDSTEIN*

I

TO THE average Jew, Jewish life is nothing but a heap of dark gray problems, specters, bogies and worries: about relief and rehabilitation, philanthropy and education, Judeophobia and anti-defamation, apostacy and intermarriage, and chiefly and for the most part, as an intensification of his constant daily pain: the problem of raising money; funds for the poor and the sick, the lame, the halt, and the blind, the widow, the aged and the orphan in Israel—the harassed and underprivileged Jews of the world.

No wonder that frequently he utters the plaintive cry: "I am working this side of the street myself. You talk about harassed Jews. What about me?" As for privileges. Every solicitor who comes seeking contribution for some Jewish agency speaks to him of his duties as a Jew, his obligations and grave moral responsibilities. No one ever mentions any satisfactions or joys inherent in Jewish life. If anyone ever did, our average Jew would smile wanly and beg: "Show me."

It is questionable whether ancient Judaism, along with other cults and religions, had its beginning in *fear*. But it does seem likely that modern Jewry will meet an early end from sheer *worry*—over Jewish problems.

It is not that the modern Jew is constitutionally incapable of responding to things spiritual, Jewish or humanitarian, that he prefers poker and golf to what passes for "Jewish activities" in America. When he turns from the ignoble strife of earning a livelihood to his own social, historical, racial, national or religious group, the we-group, is it unreasonable for him to expect to find there certain joys and satisfactions, rather than aggravations of his personal problems?

It is time, if there is to continue to be anything that goes by the name of Jewish life in America, that we began thinking in positive terms: of Jewish values, Jewish content, Jewish satisfactions; rather than dealing constantly with the negative Jewish fears, dilemmas, terrors and problems. Am I suggesting that we solve Jewish problems by ignoring or evading them? Hardly. But I am suggesting that we have not solved and shall not solve them by stressing Jewish problems to the exclusion of anything happy, or beautiful, or valuable or satisfying that may be found or, if you please, created in Jewish life.

All our other problems: case work, transient relief, leisure recreational activity, education or what you will, may be subsumed under the major problem of Jewish welfare. But our method of assuring the welfare of the modern Jew reminds one of nothing so much as the means employed by the Allies to make the world safe for democracy. That method so dissipated our moral and other resources that it left the world a hotbed of everything but democracy. In like wise our constant obsession with the false and negative goal of Jewish survival as an end in itself, and our incessant appeals for funds to save some portion of the Jewish people from destruction, has eventuated in the widespread spiritual bankruptcy of modern Jewry. What we struggled for no longer exists, and what we have preserved wasn't worth the strenuous effort. Our method of salvation has left "Jewish life" a pathetic thing, neither "Jewish" nor "living," but negative and constantly

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on the defensive, with all its thoughts centered on mere physical insurance and protection.

II

Our method has created Jewish leaders whose qualifications are not Jewishly, but economically, determined. In our frantic efforts to protect Jewish lives we have lost sight of our true goal which is, or ought to be, *Jewish life*. We have gone for the support of Jewish institutions to wealthy and highly assimilated Jews whose sole claim to distinction is financial competence, whose knowledge of Jewish life, history, literature, aims and hopes is all too frequently an appalling void. And when they give their money to an institution they usually, if not invariably, dictate its policies. We have sold our birthright to Jewish life for the mess of pottage which is the negative philosophy of Judaism held by so many of our Jewish leaders, a philosophy which is summed up in such pithy injunctions as: "Jews should neither be seen nor heard. The Gentile public is always watching the Jew. The less Jews stress their Jewishness the better off they are."

There is a common superstition about the ostrich: that it hides its head in the sand in order to become invisible. Now the ostrich's head and brain are smaller in proportion to the rest of it than are the head and brain of any other animal. And yet the ostrich is too intelligent to do what is reported of it. It is only some Jews who would attempt what even the pea-brained ostrich is too clever to try.

As a shining example I cite the case of an outstanding Jewish lay-leader of a certain "smaller community." Without his assistance—or at least so the tradition runs—no Jewish drive, or cause, or institution, can possibly succeed. He is a man of great wealth and influence *and* an important member of the American Jewish Committee and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations Board. His contribution to the local Temple is approximately one-sixth of its budget. His gifts to the Federated Charities are even more impressive. He does not merely shape local Jewish opinion, he determines it.

Being a very busy man, his Jewish information is gleaned from necessarily hasty perusals of brochures sent to him by various Jewish fund-raising agencies. When the question of distribution of funds arises at a Federation board meeting he simply states laconically: "I don't approve of the Ort. The J.D.C. does more important work than the U.P.A. Forty per cent is more than enough for the Zionists." And there is no dissent from this opinion. After all, does he not furnish a large part of the money? Ergo, why shouldn't he say where it all should go?

Theoretically, he is "in favor (*sic*) of Jewish Education." But he regards enthusiastic interest in Palestine as a reflection on the patriotism of the Jew, and Hebrew, he opines, is superfluous to our well-being. His acknowledged Jewish heroes are Benjamin Disraeli and the Rothschild Family. Or Ahad Ha-am and Bialik he does not remember having heard.

When Hans Luther, the German ambassador to the United States, visited his community some time ago, this Jewish leader was "honored" with a place on the reception committee. A few days before the big event he took occasion at a United Jewish Appeal meeting of which (naturally) he was chairman, to warn his co-religionists against speaking disparagingly of the distinguished foreign guest and particularly against being party to any protests anent Luther's presence in the community. After dining with the Nazi official, this leader returned to announce that he had it from the ambassador's own lips that anti-Semitism in Germany is much over-rated, and that it is only to Communist and immigrant Polish Jews that the Fuehrer takes exception.

This is the individual who decides for his congregation which rabbi shall be engaged, what his point of view must be

and when his period of usefulness has terminated. And for the Jewish community as a whole he decides which causes are worthy and which institutions shall be supported.

Some of us naive souls review Sinclair Lewis' book "It Can't Happen Here" and send our already terror-stricken auditors home to harrowing nightmares contemplating the menace of fascism to the welfare of the Jew. But what are we doing about the gross and grossly ignorant dictatorship in our own midst? A dictatorship that is anti-Jewish in attitude and non-Jewish in essence? For it is people like this to whom alone the term "non-Jew" applies. Christians are not non-Jews; they have a positive point of view. It is Christian. It is the assimilated, negative and furtive Jew who is really the non-Jew.

Whatever we may decide to do about it, we have ourselves to blame for the existence of the "leadership." There are some disagreeable things, the mere unfortunate possession of which is no disgrace; the shame lies in keeping them. The non-Jewish leaders of Jewry fall into this category.

In turning to this type of "leader," in thinking that the money of our non-Jews would save us, we have ignored a hundred generations of Jewish experience. And we are harvesting the fruits of our delusion. To the young Jew living in the smaller community today, de-Judaized largely because of a negative Jewish policy and no Jewish program worthy of the name, we can hardly appeal for funds to aid the causes of Jewish welfare. What does "Jewish life" mean to him? Only a silly phrase mouthed by professional Jews, full of sound and fury signifying nothing.

III

The fundamental problem of Jewish welfare in most of our communities, be they small or large, is this: That the Jew *as Jew* finds nothing to live for. We think of Jewish activities, funds, organizations, institutions, as various means to the end of Jewish survival, but we cannot justify Jewish survival as an end. It is not, it never was, and it cannot be, an end in and of itself. It is only a means to an end, and that end is the enjoyment of Jewish life. Just as an individual wants to live because of his hope and expectation of certain satisfations that he will get out of life. These are the only human ends: happiness, joys, values, the satisfaction of human aims, hopes, wants, and needs. Of course, this conception of Jewish welfare cuts a rather broad swath. It should mean Jewish well-being, Jewish happiness, the joy of Jews in living as Jews. It means this or it is not "Jewish" welfare.

We have been absorbed in *protecting some Jewish lives* and have lost Jewish life, the substance and the sourcespring of it. It is time that we ceased wasting money and energy in our efforts to insure its survival, and began to live it. This is the sole protection, the only insurance, and the only excuse for survival.

When Jewish life no longer has the potentiality of making Jews happier, then not only will it die inevitably but deservedly. The only answer to Jewish problems is Jewish life—full, rich, positive and vital. Jewish communal life, Jewish intellectual life, Jewish religious life, Jewish ceremonial life, Jewish national life.

What is needed is a program of Jewish activities, social, mental, and spiritual, that will satisfy the lack in the life of the average Jew. That he feels the want of these satisfactions is evident from his membership in the Masons, Elks, Moose, Lions, Rotary, the Christian Science, Ethical, New Thought, Unitarian, Bahai and Rosicrucian cults—to mention only a few of the associations which afford the small town Jew, inadequately, those satisfactions he should be deriving from wholesome association with the "we-group."

When Moses presented the way of Jewish life at Sinai, all Israel made the acceptance speech: *Na'aseh v'nishma,* we will *do* the commandments and then we

shall obey them. We will live the Jewish life and thus guard it from disintegration. "Getting and spending," which is practically the exclusive preoccupation of Jewish Welfare agencies, "we lay waste our powers."

Whether we prefer the Stern or the Kaplan plan, whether we regard the synagogue as the core and heart of the Jewish community, or only as one integral part of the complete organism we call the *Kehillah,* is not so important. What is important is that we make some effort toward the reconstruction, the revitalization of Jewish life, that we give it substance, content, meaning. Either Jewish life has something positive and satisfying to offer the Jew, in which case it must be resurrected and made to flourish once again; or it has not, in which event survival is hardly a desirable end but rather an eventuality to be avoided.

If we are intelligent, we do not persist in maintaining either a school, a farm, a factory, or a mine, when it has outlived its usefulness, no longer fulfils its destiny nor functions as it should. Why should we attempt to preserve the integrity of a group the members of which can no longer enjoy mutual association? Are there obstacles to group suicide (euphemistically called "assimilation")? Certainly group survival also has its problems.

From the beginnings of Jewish history there have been problems. But not until modern times, not till almost this present century have we resorted to obsession with persecuted and defective Jews, anti-defamation, *ma-yomru-ha-goyim-ism,* and the leadership of non-Jews.

The unique *shtadlan,* the notorious wealthy apologist for the Jews of antiquity, the only man in early times who attempted to adjust the Jew to the rest of the world by explaining them to their neighbors and counteracting Jew-hatred by apologies and refutations, was the Jew of Rome, Flavius Josephus, a friend of Titus, a Jewish dilettante, renegade and traitor. The sages of Israel didn't have time to waste on any such futilities. They knew that bigotry is not to be eradicated by self-defense. They realized that the only protection against this, as against many other diseases, is to strengthen ourselves to bear the onslaught. It was not the affable, assimilationist Josephus but the straightforward Jochanan ben Zakkai, who saved Israel after Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by renewing Jewish life from its sources at Jabneh.

Centuries before Josephus, the Kings of Judea made disastrous alliances with foreign kings (*and* princesses) and mulcted their depressed subjects with taxes to pay for Jewish survival by defense. It was the Prophets who insisted that it was not by strength, nor by might; not by attempting vainly to win the approval of the Gentile, but by the *living* spirit that Israel shall survive. Not by vulgar non-Jewish defense of the Jew's right to exist, but by positive Jewish life, shall Israel live.

We seem to have forgotten this centuries'-old lesson. Perhaps it is in the smaller communities, and on a small scale that we can begin to experiment in the reconstruction of Jewish life to the end that we may fashion it into a universally enjoyable and generally enjoyed way of life —something more than a baggage of wearisome, Jewish problems. Perhaps we shall again take our place as contributors in a creatively Jewish way to the spiritual wealth of the world. (Remember that the Talmud itself was created in *galut.*)

IV

When we have so reconstructed our life in the *Kehillot* of America, it is possible that our Gentile neighbors may still not love us. But we will have achieved something infinitely more important than their approval of us, to wit, our own self-respect. Our separatism will no longer be regarded (as it is even among some of us) as mere obstinate isolation. In any event we shall begin to participate in Jewish life because we get joy out of it. Certainly, then it will be simpler and easier

to raise funds for every kind and variety of Jewish cause. We never mind paying for pleasures or for *felt* needs, and in a truly Jewish society Jewish needs will be felt by all Jews who are recognized as voluntary members of the Jewish community.

In such a *Kehillah* intermarriage ceases to be a problem, because men marry the women whose company they enjoy, and mutual association in common activities will make for that enjoyment. When Jewishly learned Jews shall again guide the destinies of our communities, *zedakah* will be dispensed with traditional wisdom which was always mindful of Jewish sensitivity and regarded the rehabilitation of the needy as the highest form of charity. Then Jewish life will have a philosophy, a definite and positive point of view, cosmic in its scope so as to lift the small town Jew out of the stupid and stultifying morass of local problems and petty bickering and squabbling over precedence and honor into a world view that will include not only himself and his Jewish neighbor and the world of Jewry but will encompass his relation to humanity and to God.

A Year in An Organized Jewish Community

By ARMOND E. COHEN*

THE Jewish Community Council of Cleveland, one of the first of its kind in the country, has completed its first full year of existence. A review of its activity presents a picture of the gradual transformation of the uncoordinated, haphazard and frequently conflicting endeavors of the eighty-five thousand Jewish inhabitants of the city into an organized Jewish community which is beginning to plan its life intelligently. While it would be an overstatement to suggest that the community has been completely, thoroughly organized into a cohesive group within the short space of a year, it is true that the groundwork has been laid and the super-structure of a unified community has become visible.

The Community Council of Cleveland consists of the representatives of one-hundred-twenty organizations, including Temples and Synagogues, and their affiliates such as Men's Clubs, Sisterhoods and Alumni Organizations, philanthropic and benevolent societies, lodges and fraternal groups, local chapters of national and international organizations, and the representatives of the Jewish press in the city. The only members of the Jewish community not represented in the Council are such as participate in no Jewish organization. Hence, it is fair to assume that all who desire to be counted with the Jewish community and to participate in its work have a voice in the Council. One-hundred-sixty representatives were elected on the basis of proportional representation by each organization that is affiliated. They, in turn, are governed by an Executive Committee of thirty-six, representing a fair cross-section of the interests of the community.

By the terms of its constitution, the Community Council has no power of compulsion. No member organization can in any way be compelled to abide by any decisions of the Council. The power of the Council is only such as public opinion gives it and yet it has disputed the fears of many that such a Council could be only an innocuous and ineffective instrument. Today, a year after its organization, its achievements merit the consideration of other Jewish communities.

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II

It was only natural that the very first problem presented to the Council was that of Kashrut. Cleveland had not been outdone by other communities; we, too, had had our share of stench bombs, window smashing, personal violence, and the other symptoms of the "Kashrut racket." While from time to time the Jewish community was shamed by public explosions whose reverberations were felt in the court room, the victims of the racket were as eager for silence as the "big shots" who controlled it. Thus, at the first meeting of the Council, representatives demanded that immediate steps be taken to clean house in the Kashrut situation. Others felt that Kashrut would be the rock upon which the Council would crash if in its very inception it tackled this most difficult community problem. Wise counsel prevailed, and it was the decision of the body to establish a Kashrut Study Committee which should slowly and carefully make a thorough investigation of all aspects of Kashrut, assemble pertinent information and then present the results of its investigation to the Council at large for its decision as to further procedure.

It is almost six months since the Study Committee is at work. It has presented only preliminary reports so far, but the reports convinced the Jewish community that it cannot proceed with haste to liquidate the racket, but must wait until it uncovers much more information. Some of the questions which the preliminary report answered were: what are the sources of kosher meat? Who is in charge of Kashrut administration in each company? Who appoints the *shohtim*? Where do they get their authority? What guarantee is there that the meat sold by the wholesale company really is kosher? How are the *shohtim* paid? Are they organized? What determines the price of kosher meat? There is every reason to believe that when the Committee completes its work, there will be provided a basis for specific action by the Community Council in establishing Kashrut on a respectable basis.

Another serious question which soon came to the attention of the Council was that of the malicious manufacture of fictitious Jewish issues in political campaigns. In recent years in Cleveland in almost every election campaign "Jewish issues" were invented by Jews and non-Jews in opposing political parties intending to corral the "Jewish vote" in favor of a particular candidate. It was not uncommon for unscrupulous politicians to circulate Yiddish and English handbills which, either explicitly or by innuendo, stated that a certain candidate was unfriendly to the Jewish community. Newspapers would report these occurrences. Irresponsible and selfish Jewish politicians represented themselves as leaders of the Jewish community. Had not a halt been brought to these dangerous activities, the myth of a "Jewish vote" and "Jewish issues" would have placed the Jewish community in the same status as the Negro element of Cleveland, which has long been regarded in the eyes of the community as being controlled and on the market for buying and selling in political campaigns.

The Community Council appointed a vigorous political committee which contacted political parties and served notice on behalf of the Jewish community that it would no longer tolerate this attempted exploitation; that every effort to create a fictitious Jewish issue would result in a boomerang and would be exposed officially by the Community Council. The wrathful indignation of the Community Council unquestionably struck fear into the hearts of those who had been guilty of the betrayal of the interests of the Jewish community. We are hopeful that those who have attempted to create a Jewish vote in order to sell it have been put out of business. The Community Council is the only agency that could have achieved this. No single individual could have commanded sufficient authority or prestige to have made his actions effective.

The third important matter to which

the Community Council, in its first year, directed its attention is one that must be dealt with in every community. An educational institution informed us that in attempting to place its Jewish graduates it met an impenetrable wall of discrimination on the part of Jewish as well as non-Jewish employers. Had there been no Community Council, to what authoritative group could the University have appealed? The Council immediately appointed a wisely selected committee of Jews who themselves are in a position to know the sources of such discrimination, and charged the committee with the responsibility of studying the problem and exerting pressure of an educational nature in breaking down this discrimination. It may be that the whole problem here is far too comprehensive to be dealt with by the local community, but a local situation has been presented to us and an authoritative body of the Jewish community is attempting to deal with it.

III

Were this the complete list of achievements of the Council in a year, it would have justified itself, but the Council still found time and the personnel to carry forward other projects. Cleveland, like every other community, has probably been remiss in meeting its full obligation for the support of European and Palestinian philanthropic and educational institutions. Cleveland, like many other cities, has also been mulcted by dishonest men who make the annual rounds in collecting money for non-existent institutions, or even for those which exist but to which they transmit only an insignificantly small percentage of what they collect. The Community Council was asked to take steps to ameliorate this situation. The suggestion was made that *meshulahim* might be registered and given credentials, and contributors be educated to demand these credentials. A miscellaneous collections committee was appointed. It recommended to the Council that the Jewish Welfare Federation be asked to provide a Contingent Fund to be administered by a small committee which would make allocations to the legitimate institutions which had been sending collectors to the city. The amount of the allocation would depend on such factors as the size of the institution, the nature of its work and the extent of the support it previously received in the community. The Council adopted the report of its committee, transmitted a recommendation to the Welfare Federation which, in turn, established a Contingent Fund and appointed a committee of rabbis to administer it. The Contingent Fund has already made its first allocations. All of this was accomplished within a period of a few months. The European and Palestinian institutions will receive proper support from the Jewish community of Cleveland; the properly authorized representatives of the institutions can spend their time elsewhere, and the community will be rid of those who are unscrupulous pests.

Another problem which perennially disturbed Jewish parents was the participation of their children in Christmas festivals conducted in the schools, and the embarrassment and difficulty of Jewish students in being excused from school on Jewish holidays. Individual rabbis had, from time to time, dealt with specific cases brought to their attention. The Community Council appointed a committee on education which contacted the Superintendent of Schools and the Presidents of the Universities. As a result of the committee's work, official instructions were issued to the heads of all schools and departments requesting that Jewish children be excused without embarrassment or penalty on all Jewish holidays, and be exempted from participating in any function in the school which they might feel to be contrary to their religious principles or practice. A sad side-light of the Committee on Education was the discovery that Jewish children not infrequently declined to be absent from school on a Jewish holiday, even at the invitation of the teacher.

After the Committee on Education had reached an agreement with the Board of

Education of the city, the attention of a rabbi was called to the violation of this agreement by a non-Jewish teacher, who seemed to have a particular prejudice against Simhat Torah and informed Jewish children in his class-room that they would fail for the semester in that particular subject if they absented themselves on the holiday. The pupils were advised to be absent by the rabbi who was dealing with this situation. Upon their return to school they were informed that an important examination had been given, that they received a failure for absence, and would fail for the semester. The Executive Secretary of the Community Council, at the direction of the Educational Committee, then interviewed the teacher, who at first adhered to his own standpoint, but after a day, apparently upon consultation with higher officials, withdrew the penalty and agreed to adhere by the understanding that had been reached between the Community Council and the Board of Education.

These, in brief, are some of the major activities that can be conducted by an organized Jewish Community. There have been minor accomplishments, such as the establishment of a Community Calendar through which one can clear dates long in advance; the arbitration of disputes of purely religious or ritual matters that might otherwise have been heard in a court room; the settlement of a feud within a Jewish benevolent organization that may have otherwise resulted in a major scandal that would have brought discredit upon the Jewish community and perhaps destroyed confidence in an important philanthropic organization.

IV

What are some of the major advances that others have looked for and found wanting in the Community Council? It must still become the undisputed authoritative governing body of the Jewish community, because it is far more representative and democratic than Federation. Eventually, it should be the parent rather than the child of Federation. Federation has served a useful purpose in Cleveland. It was perhaps logical that, in the early days of the community those persons of means who were the large contributors to Jewish philanthropy should also have been those who determined policy for the Jewish community, but as we have grown and giving has been expanded upon a much broader basis, it is reasonable that the control of Jewish community funds should pass from the hands of the larger contributors to the most representative and democratic governing body the Jewish community can establish. At the present time the Jewish Community Council is more representative of the diverse elements in the Jewish community and is democratically organized. It is therefore to be hoped that in the course of time, Federation will come under the direction of the Community Council.

Much has been wrought by this Council; much more still remains to be done, but even a year in an organized Jewish Community gives one the satisfaction of sensing the vast potentialities inherent in this type of community organization in America.

Correspondence

Sirs:

Rabbi Israel has presented a very intelligent and true interpretation of the development and present status of Reformist Judaism in America. His descriptive paragraphs are particularly fine. He writes with clarity and brilliance. No one can quarrel with him in his formulation of the historic background and evolution of the Reformist School of Jewish thought in this country. May I, however, stress a point of emphasis that I think escapes him and that would be acceptable to a large proportion of Reformist leaders than he seems to allow.

In Section Five of his critique he indicates that Reformist Judaism is concerned primarily with the religious message of Israel, that practices and ceremonies formerly discarded by Reformist champions in their haste to universalize

Judaism, are being reclaimed by some Reformist leaders in their effort to provide richer Jewish content to Reformist Jewish life. "Jewish *folkways* and institutions of a not essentially religious nature are our concern because all of them contribute to the preservation of the Jewish group, and without the Jewish group there can be no Judaism." In this sentence his thinking slips into a device to support a thesis unwarranted by most Reformist teachings. Living as a group is not an end. It is a means. We can live as a group only if we live as a group looking toward definite ends. To the Reformist Jew those ends are religious. Therein is his dilemma, for the Reformist Jew really no longer lives in the realm of religious ideas. Of course there are some who still do but they constitute a vestigial element of declining numbers and influence.

The present incapacity of Reformist Judaism is the incapacity to formulate clearly the basic principles of Judaism, in terms acceptable to the average Reformist layman. Reformist leaders insist that those principles are religious, exclusively so. But to the average Reformist Jew such principles are losing their import for this age. Modern life has robbed him of this religious basis and he is unwilling or unable to accept a substitute basis. The framework of Reformist thinking has always been religious. The impact of scientific thinking and modern living is slowly dissolving this framework. The Reformist Jew is now unable to find a satisfactory framework into which to fit the baffling experience of being a Jew.

Reformist leaders talk of religious concepts and aims that seem to the layman to be irrelevant to the needs of the times. The one regnant principle of all Reformist thinking has been the religious identity and destiny of the Jew. All Jewish life has always been interpreted as following in the wake of the synagogue. Whatever Jewish life we still have in Reformist circles flows from that conviction. But it is possible for a faith or a people to continue for a long time on the impetus of its past. Peoples have been moribund for a long time before their weaknesses have been finally exposed by a complete collapse. Reformist Jewish life in America is now in that state, between the climax and the collapse. It is possible for Reformist Judaism in its flexibility and versatility to fashion new attitudes and valid ends out of its old principles. But that work has yet to be done.

Practically considered, the Conservative Jewish group and the Reformist group have almost dissolved their differences. The principles of Reformist Judaism, and even many of its ceremonials, are accepted by the Conservative camp. The division that is now maintained is not one of principle but of personality, not of conviction but of convention. The implications of the changes in Reformist Jewish life are most significant. Those that still impend may affect the permanent character of Judaism in America. I think the pent-up possibilities within the Reformist group will be realized within the next generation. We are passing out of the psycho-analytic stage of Reformist thinking into the psycho-synthetic stage which may mark the most vital period in the history of American Judaism.

This discussion calls for more detailed formulation, of course. I send it to you only for its suggestive value as a commentary, so to speak, on Rabbi Israel's text. I need scarcely add that these lines of mine are in no way intended as an unfavorable criticism of Rabbi Israel's excellent article. After all, even the Torah required a Rashi who loved the Torah exceedingly.

Jan. 8, 1937 RABBI JOSEPH L. FINK.
Buffalo, N. Y.

Realities of Jewish Life

Arable land in Palestine amounts to 7,097,000 dunams. Forest and other unarable lands amount to 13,583,000 dunams. Between 1920 and 1936 the Jews bought 618,000 dunams, for which they paid £7,731,000. Before the war, Jews in Palestine owned 660,000 dunams. Today they hold 1,332,000 dunams of land.

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The cost of sending General Dill and his soldiers to Palestine amounts to £4,000,000. This will be charged to the Palestine Government, and will practically eat up all of the surplus in the treasury.

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The former Synagogue of the Jewish liberals in Minsk, which until recently served as a meeting place for clubs, has now been converted into a Yiddish theatre. It has an auditorium, a stage, and 36 rooms.

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Beginning January 1, the Polish Government has restricted the sale of Kosher meat to half the number of butchers that have dealt in it hitherto. To prevent the resulting loss of livelihood to thousands of Jewish butchers, a cooperative is being organized to which all who have been engaged in selling Kosher meat will belong. This plan was inaugurated in Lemberg.